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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000682

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. DELISI, L. AROIAN, M. RAYNOR
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER, D. TEITELBAUM
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ZI](#) [MDC](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)

SUBJECT: MISCHIEF IN MANICALAND: VIOLENCE ON FARMS, MUTARE
MAYOR FORCED OUT

REF: HARARE 635

Classified By: Political Officer Win Dayton under Section 1.5 b/d

[11.](#) (U) SUMMARY: Credible sources report that ruling party supporters who have seized farms in Manicaland are beating farm workers suspected of loyalty to the opposition. International Organization for Migration (IOM) is preparing to care for farm workers who are being displaced by the seizures and associated violence. In the province's capital of Mutare, a mob of ZANU-PF supporters on April 21 locked out the duly elected MDC mayor and the MDC-dominated City Council and have refused to permit their return.

Farm Workers Beaten, Displaced

[12.](#) (C) MDC MP Roy Bennett advised emboffs on April 21 that his recently seized farm, Charleswood Estate (reftel), continued to be sealed by personnel from the army and police support unit. After the removal of management principals from the farm on Good Friday, occupying forces had effectively prevented workers from leaving the farm. Bennett confirmed that workers had been given the option of departing or staying on to work for the farm's new operator, Zimbabwe Defense Industries (ZDI), but asserted that workers wanting to leave had no means to do so -- they lacked transportation or arrangements for alternative room and board. He asserted that nearly all the workers and their families, most of whom had been associated with his family for more than a generation, would choose to leave given a meaningful opportunity to do so. Bennett said he was willing to arrange for their transportation and housing pending his legal battle over Charleswood, but that occupying forces prevented him from entering the farm or communicating with anybody on the farm.

[13.](#) (C) Bennett said he was due to have heard on April 22 an urgent court application seeking his possession of or access to the farm. He noted that he already had numerous court orders establishing his right to possess the farm (a registered export processing zone), and had effectively used connections with local police and chiefs to stay on the farm in the past. He would draw on such influence with another favorable court order but was not confident it would prevail over the apparent mandate of his farm's latest occupiers. He noted that contacts within the military confided to him that orders for the military role in the farm's seizure had come from the President.

[14.](#) (SBU) Bennett reported that, according to a farm worker who had managed to depart the farm by April 20, ZANU-PF supporters directing the farm's occupation were forcing farm workers to attend ZANU-PF rallies, at which they were made to chant pro-ruling party slogans and to vilify the MDC. Those suspected of being key MDC sympathizers and some just randomly selected were singled out for beatings, in which they were slathered with mud and beaten with sticks. (Comment: This practice would be consistent with well documented, periodically applied ruling party tactics predating independence. End comment.) Among those beaten was an octogenarian pensioner.

[15.](#) (SBU) IOM representatives reported that police officials visited the Anglican Church facility where most of Charleswood's evicted management and their families were being housed and accused church personnel of engaging in anti-government activities. This prompted movement of Charleswood's management "refugees" to other safe houses under IOM's care. According to an MDC provincial representative, police beat some of them who were waiting for a bus to take them to another location.

[16.](#) (SBU) IOM representatives corroborated Bennett's allegations and said they were working with him to arrange shelter and food for any that could leave the farm. They said they had received unconfirmed reports of additional farm seizures under similar circumstances involving security forces and beaten/displaced workers. Most significant among

these was the highly publicized Kondozi farm seizure, which pitted Minister of Agriculture Joseph Made and the the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) against a partnership of black and white Zimbabweans reportedly aligned with Vice President Joseph Msika and a host of local chiefs. IOM representatives confirmed press reports that at least 500 of the farm's reported 5,000 workers had left the farm and were living in camps by the roadside. IOM was initiating action to assure provision of food and shelter. Many had reported being beaten with rubber truncheons by security forces who had seized the property for ARDA, which was now operating the farm.

17. (SBU) An IOM representative indicated that at least half of Zimbabwe's remaining commercial farms were in Manicaland, and at least half of them had been designated for seizure. He was unsure how many of these already had been invaded but suggested many had been at least partially invaded -- often with police and army support -- and were operating at less than full capacity.

Opposition Mayor Evicted

18. (U) According to an MDC press release, a mob of more than 2,000 ZANU-PF supporters at 8 a.m. on April 21 sealed off the office of MDC Mayor Kagurabadza Mutare's civic center. The release alleged that most supporters had been ferried in from outside Mutare, and some from outside Manicaland. Police failed to respond to the mayor's numerous calls for assistance. An MDC provincial party spokesman reported that the mayor was finally permitted to depart the building that night after addressing the crowd and surrendering the keys to his office.

19. (SBU) Kagurabadza told poloff from his home on April 22 that his office was being occupied by demonstrators and neither he nor any of the city council were permitted entry. He recounted that the mob's initial demand had been merely that he meet with them. After he resisted initially over security concerns, he met during the evening of April 21. They demanded that he agree to suspend recently imposed rate hikes. He noted that the hikes had been approved by Minister for Local Government Chombo but he agreed to suspend them provisionally until a meeting of stakeholders could be convened on the matter April 26. Upon that concession, the demonstrators demanded the resignation of the mayor and the city council. Kagurabadza refused, promising to leave when the people lawfully voted in another mayor. The demonstrators said they would only leave if instructed to do so by Minister Chombo.

110. (SBU) The mayor said that demonstration leaders appeared to include former ZANU-PF city councilor George Gambe and a local self-proclaimed "chief" Murawa. MDC provincial spokesman added that ZANU-PF Central Committee member and defeated mayoral candidate Shadreck Beta and ZANU-PF Provincial Youth Chairman Enoch Boruzingaze also were involved, although Kagurabadza could not confirm this. The mayor confirmed that he and the council generally enjoyed a good working relationship with key ZANU-PF city management officials appointed by the city's last ZANU-PF municipal administration.

111. (SBU) Kagurabadza advised that he was attempting to resolve the conflict through negotiation, for now eschewing the party's historically favored legal maneuvers that he considered uniformly expensive and unsuccessful. He had contacted Manicaland Governor Nyambuya, who had urged that he work things out through the police. He had an appointment on April 23 with the Chief of Police for Manicaland, who had promised to "try to convince" the demonstrators to leave. His attempts to reach Chombo so far had proven unsuccessful.

Comment

112. (U) An MDC stronghold in the last parliamentary election, Manicaland has long been a source of critics of ruling party policy outside and inside the party, including Morgan Tsvangirai, Simba Makoni, and Edgar Tekere. The ruling party had made a well-publicized priority of retaking the province, which is the MDC's only bastion of predominantly rural non-Ndebele constituencies the ruling party considers its bread and butter. Mutare's mayoral contest last year was marked by violence -- the Kagurabadza's car was demolished and MDC activists were beaten and knifed -- in spite of a "campaign code of conduct" sponsored by the churches and publicly subscribed to by both party's candidates.

113. (C) Recent developments in Manicaland bear testament to the comprehensiveness and relentlessness of the ruling party's urban-rural assault strategy. While most prominent in Manicaland, strong-arm tactics continue to be evident throughout the country in forms too numerous and imaginative

to recount here. The MDC's continuing inability to protect its activists from systematic beatings, its mayors from dismissal, its MPs from arrest (recent arrest of MP Masaiti to be reported septel) are a significant factor in the public's sharp drift from politics. Indeed, the party's fundamental challenge remains as it has from its inception: how does a democratic party committed to non-violence contest a liberation party impervious to international criticism and unafraid to employ all tools at its disposal -- violence, domination of the media, monopoly on all means of coercion -- to remain in power?

SULLIVAN